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FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM The MacNeil/Lehrer Report

STATION WETA TV
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SUBJECT Full Text

ROBERT MACNEIL: Agreement on a new SALT treaty, which the Administration has been saying has been imminent for weeks, today apparently slipped again. Reuters news agency quotes Administration officials as saying that details remain to be agreed on with the Russians, and final accord is unlikely before next week.

One of those details has already flared into controversy in this country, even before the treaty is signed; and that detail may provide the hottest area of battle when the treaty comes to the U.S. Senate for ratification. It is the problem of verification, an issue which has dogged disarmament talks with the Soviet Union going back to the '50s and President Eisenhower's "Open Skies" proposal. The issue has produced new anxieties because of the loss of monitoring facilities in Iran.

Senator John Glenn has suggested that the SALT treaty should not be signed until the verification issue is cleared up. The Carter Administration says we have adequate means to monitor Soviet compliance. Yesterday the President himself described those means as extraordinary.

Tonight, what means do we have to verify Soviet compliance, and are they adequate?

JIM LEHRER: Robin, a few weeks ago Meg Greenfield, the Newsweek columnist, wrote what should be the rule for everyone involved in the SALT II debate. She urged all of us not to be intimidated by the swamp of jargon that abounds the subject, and to demand that the politicians and others conduct their arguments